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JALLIKATTU AS A SPIRITUAL TRADITION OF TAMILS

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ABSTRACT:

Tamils are one of the earliest inhabitants of in the world. They are belongs to the Dravidian linguistic family, living in Southern India, particularly in Tamil Nadu. Their language has been considered as the classical language of the world and it also serve as the Mother of Dravidian linguistic family. The number of classical literature, archaeological remains and Foreigners accounts were imprinted the classical heritage of both Tamils and Tamil language. The celebrating festival traditions and rituals habits of Tamils have been reflects their rich classical heritage.



KEYWORDS: *earliest inhabitants , classical literature, archaeological remains.*

INTRODUCTION

Since the ancient times during the festivals days, Tamils have been enthusiastically participating in different kinds of games, which are associated with social, cultural and spiritual beliefs of the Tamils. Due to the Modern Trends and western cultural impacts over the Tamils, some of their ancient Traditions could not survive in the present day, but some of the spiritual Traditions still exist. **Jallikattu** is one among the survive Traditions, which reflects the Chivalry and spiritual Traditions of Tamils. In these backgrounds the present research paper has an attempt to highlights the

spiritual values and cultural significance of **Jallikattu** and also to focus it serve as a heritage identity of Tamils.

ETYMOLOGY OF JALLIKATTU:-

The **Jallikattu** is a one of the ritual traditions of pongal festival. It has been called as the heritage festivals of Tamils. The word **Jallicut** or **Jallikattu** literally means tying of ornaments around the horns of the bull. The Jalli was one type of the coins of medieval and early nineteenth century A.D., in Southern India. The Jalli (coins) or gold ornaments and kattu (tied) around the horns of the bull. So it becomes called as the **Jallikattu**. During the Pongal festivals days, those are tame the bull, they can taken the **Jallikattu** (rope of coins or gold ornaments) from the

horns of bulls. The **Jallikattu** has been known in different names like, *erthazhuvuthal* (embracing the bull) *Manchu Virattu* (chase the bull) and *Madupidithal* (Capture the bull) but the name **Jallikattu** is very familiar in the present day of Tamil society. Once the horns of the bulls were adorned with colorful, cloth and bell when the customs come the vogue of horns and necks of the bulls were tied with Jalli (coins) it become called as **Jallikattu**. Anyhow **Jallikattu** as a traditional game of Tamils has been prevalent since the ancient times in Tamilland.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE ABOUT THE JALLIKATTU:-

The **Jallikattu** has served as the part of ritual traditions among the

pastoral community of Tamil region since the ancient times. The ancient Tamil literature, archaeological remains and Historical records were attested about the prevalent of Jallikattu tradition in Tamils land. The sangam literature *Kalithokai* was earliest literary works to refer this tradition. Its seven long poems totaling over 300 breath taking lines were mentioned those who have tamed the bull, he will marry a girl like a beautiful deer. Another literature *Silapathikaram* also mentioned, it is a habit of Tamils a girl has married only to who will chase the bull during the pongal festival celebration. The 3500 years old rock painting has found at Karrikiyur village, Nilgris District and Kalluthu Mettupatti in Madurai District has portrait the bull chasing of the ancient Tamils. Besides 400 years old a memorial statue discovered in Peethanachipalayam in Attur District has focused the traditions of making a memorial stone for the memory of bull tamers. Further the Tamil Brahmi scripted coins were found in Madurai dated 3rd century B.C., to the reign of *Korkkaipandianmaran*. This coin pictures reflects a young man try to chasing the bull. Hence above mentioned historical evidences have been throw light on Jallikattu as an ancient Traditions of Tamils and it has existed in Tamil Nadu since the ancient times. But in the Present days this traditional is well known only in pastoral areas like Madurai, Tirunelveli and Ramanathapuram District were once the territory of the ancient Pandiyan Kingdom.

JALLIKATTU AND PONGAL FESTIVAL TRADITIONS:

The Pongal is one of the traditional and religious harmony festivals of Tamils has been celebrating throughout Tamil Nadu even in the world, where ever Tamils live they are celebrate this festival without any disparities. The traditions and rituals of this festivals has reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Tamils. It is a harvest festival has continuously celebrating four days from on the eve of *Tai month* (One of the Tamil months). The second day of this festival is dedicated to the bull, because bulls are main sources for cultivations on this day each and every villages of Tamil Nadu particularly in Madurai Region has been conducting *Jallikattu* to venerate the hard work of bulls and give special pujas and rituals to the them. The *Koilkalai* (bulls of the village temple) and specially trained bulls are brought from various villages to the *Jallikattu*, where ever *Jallikattu* has been conducted. The bulls which take part in this game is beautified in different ways shining of small metal bells are tied to its necks and legs and a string of coins (some of gold coins) are tied in the forehead. Its horns are sharpened and polished with oil. The colour full powder is applied all over the body of the bull. These decorated bulls are kept in *Tholuvam* (as a place to systematically regulate the bull) and released through the *Vaadivasal* (exit way of bull from *Tholuvam*). The youngsters of village are eager to exhibit their physical strength through taming the bull in the *Jallikattu* games of the Pongal festival. They are believe that the holiest achievement of their life is to tame the bull and taken cloths with gold coins from the horns of the tamed bull. According to the Sangam literature, it is a Tamil tradition the maiden girls are choosing their future bride groom, those who are successfully tamed the bull. They would not marry even their next life a man who feared tame the bull. So it served as a place for matrimonial alliances similarly place of chivalry activities of Tamils. It is noted here present day the bull tamers are have instead of marry the girl they get different types of prices are given by the village committee and owners of the bulls. In this context the *Jallikattu* games has closely related to the socio, the cultural and Traditions of the Tamils. For the spiritual and cultural purpose of this martial game has been systematically arranged every year in throughout the villages of Tamilnadu by the village committees.

The Spiritual Character of Jallikattu:-

Jallikattu is a martial game of Tamils and also part and parcel of Pongal festival Traditions. In general the village folk believe that it has much Spiritual character. During the month of *Tai* each and every villages of Tamil Nadu especially in Madurai region has been organize the *Jallikattu* for fulfill their offerings to their village God and Goddess. The village people have a faith on bull as a sign of prosperity. The bulls draw the plough as well as pull the cart. Its dung serves as rich manure to the cultivation. In mythology it is *vahana* (vehicle) of Lord Siva as a one of the Dravidian Gods. So statues of bulls found in all the Siva temple of Southern India. The worship of bull has been a tradition of Tamils prevalent since the age of Indus Valley Civilizations, because the bull has been serving as main elements

of their livelihood. It is a tradition that each and every village temple has *koil kaalai* (bull of the temple) is gifted to the temple by village peoples for blessing their family and growth of their cultivation. They also treated it most respectfully because they believe their local deities have living in the form of *koilkaalai*. Therefore these temples bulls are allowed to wander around the village and eat any cultivate crops in any field.

The folks have a faith to conduct the *Jallikattu* ritual to the village temple is as their spiritual duties for get sufficient rains for cultivation in throughout the year. It also connected, with the fertility of crops. They also believe it could be remove the evils sprit and epidemic diseases from the village. In general the common people are believes that the human sacrifice is offered to village God and Goddess through the *Jallikattu* traditions. In this spiritual connection the *Jallikattu* has been conduct all over Tamil Nadu especially in Madurai District at karadikal for *Perumal Samy*, Alanganallur for *Muniyasamy*, Karumathur for *Moonuswamy*, Mudalikkulam for *PathinetampadiKaruppasamy*, Kalimangalam for *Muniyandy*, Kulamangalam for *Ravothar* (Islamic tomb) and in Dindigul District, at Ulagampatty for *Saint Antony Church*. Even though the Tamils have been follow different religious faith, but as the Tamils they celebrate the pongal festival with jallikattu rituals on the basis of their hereditary spiritual faith. So it is not spiritual tradition of particular religion but spiritual belief Tamils heritage.

It is a tradition, before to start the jallikattu a group of elders of the village have did the *etchitholithal* (sprinkle the holy water which is remain from preparation of pongal) each and every houses and huts, with shouted chorusly” ***pongalo pongal, palpanaponka, patti peruka, parthakannu padirendru vedikka, noinodiellam theruvoda oda.***” Its states that growth of pongal in the milk pot, growth of cattle’s and to demolish the evil eyes and to eradicates the diseases from the soil. They believe that these rituals make their house with holy and protect their cattle from the vulnerable diseases. It is one of the important spiritual rituals of Tamil peasant community have been only do it if the pongal festival celebrate with jallikattu tradition. In general the spiritual traditions the *Jallikattu* games has been to began with first release of *KoilKaalai* (temple bull) and also no one to tame the this bull because it is a bull of the god. Subsequently the remaining bulls were released to one by one through the *Vaadivasal* (exit way) from the *Tholuvam*. The youngsters of village has a faith to participate in the *Jallikattu* is their spiritual duties. They entered the arena of *Jallikattu* with unarmed and embraced the bull. It is noted here in the history of *Jallikattu* tradition no bull has been died while the chasing, similarly number of bull tamers has been died. There is beliefs that if any bull tamers could be die while chasing the bull his spirit will go to the heaven. He also became treated as a village hero and worship as a village deities like that worship of Alagathevar statue found in Sorikkampatti village, Madurai District, who was died after chasing the pull in Vikkaramangalam *Jallikattu*. This customs have still prevalent in Madurai region. Some of the bull tamers got permanent wounds on their body; it showed as the symbol of bravest activity. Hence the *Jallikattu* has been as causes for prosperity of Wealth, Cultivation, and growths of Cattle have and remove the evil spirits of villages. So it is a spiritual tradition of village community has been worshiped the both bulls and hero of bull chasing. Therefore this spiritual tradition has been still surviving in rural Tamilnadu as a part of Spiritual traditions of village god and Goddess of Tamils.

Legal challenges of jallikattu;

During the colonial rule the Tamil chivalry jallikattu was declared as the criminal tribe’s games. Consequence of this the jallikattu was prevalent in the south part of Tamilnadu. At present due to the impact of the globalization, the western culture and emergence of animal welfare organization are led wrongly interpreted the jallikattu as barbarian games and its causes for the cruelty of the animals. This view of notion and implementation of provision of prevention of cruelty to animals (PCA) Act 1950 are led to the ban jallikattu . In 29 march 2006 the Madras high court bench directed the state government of Tamilnadu to ban the jallikattu by implementation the Prevention of the Cruelty to Animals Act. Meanwhile this circumstances many cases filed against the jallikattu tradition. Duo to the some individual effort in 19 January 2007 Madras high court division bench granted the permission to conduct the jallikattu only in Madurai region under the direction of district administration.

Consequence of this the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) took this matter on appeal to the Supreme Court which stayed the division bench order. Thereafter the state government of Tamilnadu had enacted the Tamilnadu regulating of jallikattu act 2009 and laid down elaborate procedure to conduct the jallikattu. For the challenges to the state government legal effort of 2009, the PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) as international non government organization was filed a petition in the supreme courts. The Supreme Court passed the final verdict on 7 May 2014 to banning the jallikattu. After that jallikattu could not be conducted in 2015 and 2016. It led to brought angry among the people especially peasant community. They say even we could not dream to celebrate our pongal festival without the jallikattu tradition; it is a violation of our hereditary spiritual faith and cultural rights. It is noted here jallikattu is a spiritual and traditional games of Tamil peasant community has been conducted every year since the immemorial for honour the bulls and village deities to the growth of cultivation and cattle's. It is nature if any one try to stop age old spiritual rituals of particular peoples, it's led to the people movement to recapture the lost spiritual identities. Therefore the Tamil peasant communities organized a mass people movements to recapture the jallikattu ritual because the pongal festival rituals could not fulfilled without jallikattu traditions. So the Tamils were eagerly involved in this movement without any disparities like caste, clan, religion and region and even abroad Tamils were support to this mass cultural peaceful agitation. This movement has found in vigorously at Madurai, Coimbatore, Trichy, Dindigul, Theni and Marina beach of Chennai and all so important junctions of Tamilnadu. This mass peaceful struggle had reached its peak on January 2016. The government takes many steps to stop this agitation, but the peoples say we could not stop our cultural agitation until the government should give legal surety for conduct the jallikattu. During these days everywhere in Tamilnadu we hear the youngster shouted **vaadivaasal therakkamal veedu vaassal chellamattom**. (We do not go entrance our house without open the gate of Tholuvam). In general jallikattu is not only the traditional games, but it has much spiritual character. So it's united the whole Tamils against the banning of jallikattu. The consequent of this cultural agitation both state and central government takes many efforts to stop this agitation without permission to conduct the jallikattu. But the peoples say we do not stop our cultural agitation without us get permanent and legal surety should be given by the government to conduct the jallikattu every year in the pongal festival days in through out Tamilnadu.

Due to the mass cultural agitation, the Tamilnadu state Assembly under the chief minister chief of O. Pannerselvam has unanimously passed a special bill to conduct the jallikattu on 23 January 2017. After that Supreme Court give legal relaxation to conduct the jallikattu in Tamilnadu with some restriction. After that the jallikattu traditions began to conduct all over Tamilnadu. Any how the Tamils recapture their age old spiritual tradition and cultural identities through the peaceful mass movement and it also teach lesson to the constitutional authority about the heritage importance's. If any authority takes effort to eliminate the cultural identity of Tamils it can be bring the unbelievable mass people revolution against that authority. Therefore in future the constitutional authorities only take restriction for to regulate the age old heritage of the any people not to eliminate it.

CONCLUSION:-

Jallikattu is a one of the surviving age old spiritual tradition of the pongal festival has been conducted each and every village's Tamilnadu since immemorial times. The historical evidences were imprinted the age oldness of this tradition. This tradition has been reflects the social, cultural and spiritual life character of the Tamils. Since the ancient times the Tamil folks has celebrate their harvest (pongal) festival with jallikattu tradition without caste, community, region and religious partialities. The peasants of Tamil community believe that conduct the jallikattu tradition is their spiritual duty, it causes for the growth of their cattle's and cultivations and also to protect them from the evils factor. Further it served as their cultural identity; it had faced so many challenges since the colonial rule. At Present day some Western thinkers and different types of animal's welfare organization were in the name animal protection they wrongly declared that *Jallikattu* is a barbarian traditions, and it lead to the cruelties of the animals. They also take many efforts to banning the *Jallikattu* traditions through the

constitution. Yet the Pongol festival as the heritage festival of Tamils can not celebrate it without jallikattu tradition. So common people and young generation of Tamil community were organized a mass cultural agitation through out Tamilnadu against the banning the jallikattu. Consequence of this mass cultural agitation Tamils have to recapture their heritage identity. They also get legal recognition to conduct the jallikattu with some restriction. In general we under stood that the globalization and other legal factors can not eliminate the age old heritage of the Tamils, because the Tamils life's are embodiment with their classical heritage. Therefore jallikattu as a spiritual and the heritage identity of Tamils it will exist until Tamils live on the earth.

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